

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
San Luis Valley Field Office  
46525 Highway 114  
Saguache, CO 81149**

## **Environmental Assessment**

**San Luis Valley Field Office  
Travel Management Plan Modifications**

DOI-BLM-CO-300-2013-0004 EA

February, 2013



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Contents

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION.....	- 2 -
1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION .....	- 2 -
1.2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	- 3 -
1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED .....	- 4 -
1.4 DECISION TO BE MADE.....	- 5 -
1.5 PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW .....	- 5 -
1.6 SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES .....	- 8 -
CHAPTER 2 - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES.....	- 8 -
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	- 8 -
2.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL .....	- 8 -
2.2.1 Proposed Action.....	- 8 -
2.2.2 No Action Alternative.....	- 14 -
CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS .....	- 14 -
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	- 14 -
3.1.1 Interdisciplinary Team Review .....	- 14 -
3.2 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES .....	- 17 -
3.2.1 THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES .....	- 17 -
3.2.2 WILDLIFE TERRESTRIAL .....	- 18 -
3.2.3 MIGRATORY BIRDS.....	- 19 -
3.3 HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT .....	- 20 -
3.3.1 CULTURAL RESOURCES .....	- 20 -
3.3.2 NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS .....	- 22 -
3.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY .....	- 23 -
CHAPTER 4 - CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION.....	- 23 -
4.1 LIST OF PREPARERS AND PARTICIPANTS .....	- 23 -
4.2 TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, AGENCIES CONSULTED.....	- 23 -
CHAPTER 5 - REFERENCES.....	- 24 -



## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

## **1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION**

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT TITLE: San Luis Valley Field Office Travel Management Plan Modifications

PLANNING UNIT: San Luis Valley Field Office, San Luis Resource Area, Front Range District

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** The San Luis Valley Field Office administers lands within the San Luis Resource Area (SLRA). The project area intended for this EA manages Public Lands within the entire SLRA, and consists of only those public land tracts (just over 500,000 acres) managed in trust by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) located in Saguache, Rio Grande, Alamosa, and Conejos counties, and within State of Colorado Congressional District #3. See Map below.



APPLICANT: BLM



## **1.2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan (SLRA TMP, CO-500-2005-0016-EA) designated routes for 23 travel management subunits and was approved in the summer of 2009 after many years of analysis to develop a Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management system for BLM lands in the San Luis Valley. The most significant result of that effort was to amend the SLRA RMP and change the travel designation of Area #1 (the vast majority of BLM lands in the San Luis Valley) from "Open" to "Limited", thus eliminating cross-country motorized and mechanized travel throughout the Resource Area, with the exception of two small "Open" areas that were also designated in the same amendment. The associated activity-level Travel Management Plan (TMP) then designated all routes (roads and trails) for specific modes of travel and allowable use.

Since the finalization of the TMP, there have been a number of events in the Field Office, as well as policies from the BLM's state and national offices that have spurred the San Luis Valley Field Office to take a second look at some decisions in the TMP.

Implementing the TMP began in earnest in 2010 by picking Elephant Rocks ACEC as a test area to develop a template for consistent implementation across the Valley, such as positive and negative signing, route closures, and rehabilitation efforts (sub-soiling, seeding, plantings, etc.). Simultaneously, the BLM San Luis Valley Recreation staff began to seek funding for supplies, such as: signs, posts, hardware, materials for barricades, kiosks, etc., through agency programs and external grants.

At the start of Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12), the three separate field offices in the San Luis Valley (Saguache, Del Norte, and La Jara) were combined into one San Luis Valley Field Office (SLVFO) with a single BLM line officer.

Also at the beginning of FY12, the BLM Colorado Engineering Field Office (EFO) developed new guidelines for all units on how to enter roads, trails and other routes into GIS (the official record for the Field Office's transportation system) and FAMS (Facilities Asset Management System) to document the transportation system and to develop over time the 'maintenance levels' and 'maintenance intensities' of all linear features for each unit. This prompted the SLVFO to begin looking at numbering and naming all of the roads in the TMP, the majority of which had neither names nor numbers – only the old system routes from the 1970's previously had road numbers and names.

In FY12, the SLVFO's GIS and Recreation staff began to number routes and to propose names for those routes in as systematic a way as possible, a process that still continues. The numbering of routes is a Bureau-wide, uniform, administrative task, whereas naming roads is a Field Office task with final decision on road names by the Field Manager.

As an ongoing process with the SLVFO's Land Health Assessments, and looking to develop projects aimed at improving watershed health across the Field Office, the Soil/Water/Air/Riparian program led field trips to two priority areas in the summer of 2012 (Trickle Mountain ACEC and the Rio Grande Natural Area) to look at ways of improving the



health of each of those watersheds. In both cases, and relative to all the watershed-based Land Health Assessments, transportation routes factor heavily into the equation for determining overall land health.

Also during this time, the SLVFO Recreation program was successful in obtaining a large grant from the Colorado State Parks OHV Grant Program, specifically aimed at acquiring materials and equipment for a large-scale Travel Management implementation effort. Part of the grant includes the purchase of road signs for 50 roads. Another part of that same grant is for the development of signs for kiosks that will be placed on BLM at specially designated areas and at major portals to public lands throughout the San Luis Valley. The maps are evenly split between a North and South end of the Valley (they overlap some in the middle) and focus on how the public can access public lands, display land status between private, local, state and federal ownership, define specially designated areas (SRMAs, ACECs, WSAs, RGNA, GMUs, etc.) and highlight public roads throughout all of those land ownership designations. Because the signs will last for more than a decade, it is important to have the best information we can possibly provide on them from the outset. The signs will be physically produced in Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) as a result of the State Parks OHV grant, with implementation beginning in FY13 as well.

The SLVFO has also received several proposals from individuals and organizations over the last year, primarily related to trail proposals in the Del Norte/Monte Vista area, but also including road issues and a request for seasonal road closure dates to protect Gunnison Sage Grouse lek and nesting areas in the Poncha Pass area of the Field Office.

Considering this wide variety of new concerns in the realm of travel management, the SLVFO Recreation staff felt it was necessary to inventory the entire transportation system on all BLM lands in the San Luis Valley for: 1) the sake of overall familiarity and to ground-truth the entire system; 2) to assess public-driven proposals; 3) to inform several ongoing analysis efforts (Rio Grande Natural Area, Solar Energy Zones, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics inventory, Blanca Wetlands ACEC Expansion, Land Health Assessments, Range TPR's, etc.); 4) to inventory for Travel Management implementation material needs (signs, carsonite markers, kiosks, barricades, stickers, restoration materials, etc.); and, 5) to plan for future road maintenance agreements. The results of that lengthy effort are these proposed modifications to the SLVFO Travel Management Plan.

### **1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED**

The purpose of the action is to modify the existing 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan to better meet the Desired Future Conditions, as stated in that plan. The objective of the proposed action is to manage the San Luis Valley Field Office Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management System to meet Public Land Health Standards, reduce the areas where those standards are not being met, improve resource protection and reduce negative impacts to resources, improve connectivity and efficiency of routes, ensure provision of appropriate and reasonable public access, and provide for adequate and appropriate recreational opportunities and experiences. The proposed modifications to the SLVFO Travel Management Plan would accomplish this objective.



The need for the action is to comply with the travel management objectives of the San Luis Valley RMP (1991) as amended by the San Luis Valley TMP (2009) and the multiple use mandate of FLPMA Sec. 302.

#### **1.4 DECISION TO BE MADE**

The BLM will decide whether to implement the proposed San Luis Valley Field Office Travel Management Plan (TMP) Modifications project based on the analysis contained in this Environmental Assessment (EA). This EA will analyze the difference between leaving the TMP as it is, versus adjusting it (based on monitoring and continuous inventory) to meet public desires and public lands health standards. The BLM may choose to: a) implement the project as proposed with modifications/mitigation, or b) not implement the project at this time.

#### **1.5 PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW**

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:** The proposed action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

<b>Name of Land Use Plan</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>
LUP Name: San Luis Resource Area Resource Management Plan	December 18, 1991
LUP Name: San Luis Resource Area Resource Management Plan (as amended for Travel Management)	May 14, 2009
<b>Name of Tiered Activity-Level Plan</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>
San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan (DOI-BLM-CO-500-2005-0016-EA)	June 4, 2009
Penitente Canyon SRMA Travel Management Modifications (DOI-BLM-CO-140-2011-0010-DN)	October 7, 2011

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decisions:

LUP Name: San Luis Resource Area Management Plan (Dec 1991) as amended in May 2009 for Travel Management Designations.

**Decision Language:** It is my (SLVPLC Center Manager) proposed decision to change the OHV Open area designation to that of OHV Limited for the Area #1 – San Luis Valley General (p.2 Decision Record).

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions):

The 1991 San Luis Resource Area Management Plan (RMP) deferred specific access and transportation decisions to a future plan. In accordance with BLM policy, the RMP was first amended in May of 2009 to designate Travel Management Areas as open, closed or limited to



OHV use. The implementation plan (CO-500-2005-0016-EA), then specifically designated routes in those areas by type of allowable use within the Travel Management Areas, and was achieved in the June 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan:

Decision Language (SLRA TMP): I (SLVPLC Center Manager) have determined, based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, that the project is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in the San Luis Resource Area RMP/FEIS. An environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project.

### **Adaptive Management**

Adaptive Management recognizes that sometimes there is incomplete data when managing natural resources and that through continued research and monitoring of the effects of implementing decisions and actions, new information will be developed. This information can be reevaluated and incorporated into the management plan, and practices can be adjusted accordingly. As the Travel Management Plan (TMP) decisions have begun to be implemented and monitored, observations have been made as to whether or not the desired future conditions specified in the TMP are being achieved over time. Based on monitoring results acquired over the last three years, and utilizing Adaptive Management principles, it is determined by the Field Office staff that some adjustments to the TMP's implementation decisions are necessary in order to ensure that Desired Future Conditions are being achieved.

### **Desired Future Conditions (DFC)**

The following DFCs define the overall goals and objectives of the TMP:

1. **Maintain and Improve Public Land Health** – Environmental impacts resulting from access and travel uses on the public lands are improving or moving towards being in compliance with the Public Land Health Standards (see Appendix 4 of TMP).
2. **Maintain Recreational Access** – Access and travel uses on the public lands are improving or moving towards being in compliance with the Recreation Management Guidelines for Meeting Public Land Health Standards (see Appendix 5 of TMP) and other applicable recreation management planning documents. User conflicts and safety issues are satisfactorily resolved.
3. **Provide Appropriate and Reasonable Access** – The public lands are served by an effectively managed and maintained system of roads and trails that provides access and travel opportunities for legitimate recreational and non-recreational purposes for motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized users.

**Applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents and policy that cover the proposed action:**

- DOI-BLM-CO-500-2005-0016-EA - San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan, 4 June 2009.
- DOI-BLM-CO-140-2011-0010-DN - Penitente Canyon SRMA Travel Management Modifications, 7 October 2011.
- A Section 106 Report in compliance with the 36 CFR 800 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended.
- Protocol between the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office and the BLM.
- SLVFO 2010/2011 Land Health Assessments.
- SLVFO 2012 Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Inventory.

### **Tiering to Existing NEPA**

This San Luis Valley Field Office TMP Modifications EA will tier to the San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan (DOI-BLM-CO-500-2005-0016-EA) and the Penitente Canyon SRMA Travel Management Modifications plan (DOI-BLM-CO-140-2011-0010-DN).

### **Public Land Health Standards**

In January 1997, the Colorado State Office of the BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health and amended all RMPs in the State. Standards describe the conditions needed to sustain public land health and apply to all uses of public lands.

Standard 1: Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes.

Standard 2: Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbance such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods.

Standard 3: Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's potential.

Standard 4: Special status, threatened and endangered species (federal and state), and other plants and animals officially designated by the BLM, and their habitats are maintained or enhanced by sustaining healthy, native plant and animal communities.

Standard 5: The water quality of all water bodies, including ground water where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands will achieve or exceed the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado.

Because standards exist for each of these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. For the resources brought forward for this analysis, these findings are located in Chapter 3 of this document. For resources not brought forward in this analysis, those findings are located in the Affected Environment/Environmental



Consequences/Mitigation Measures section of the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan, which this EA is tiered to.

## **1.6 SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES**

**1.6.1 Scoping:** NEPA regulations (40 CFR §1500-1508) require that the BLM use a scoping process to identify potential significant issues in preparation for impact analysis. The principal goals of scoping are to allow public participation to identify issues, concerns, and potential impacts that require detailed analysis.

### **Persons/Public/Agencies Consulted:**

Significant outreach and public participation to initially identify issues related to Travel Management Planning was achieved in the original San Luis Resource Area TMP EA (CO-500-2005-0016-EA, see pp. 232-236) through a variety of means and with numerous stakeholders, including: web postings, public service announcements, mailings, news releases, tribal consultations, interagency consultations, public meetings, informal meetings, email, etc.

Numerous comments were received and issues identified that included all aspects of resource management that still remain valid to this day. Given the recent completion of the 2009 SLRA Travel Management Plan, it is determined that another public scoping effort of that magnitude is unnecessary for the agency to understand the myriad issues related to Travel Management Planning and Implementation on BLM lands in the San Luis Valley, or to make an informed decision related to modifications of the current system of roads and trails. Scoping for this San Luis Valley Field Office Travel Management Plan Modifications Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-CO-300-2013-0004-EA) has been achieved utilizing the SLVFO NEPA register, which is posted on BLM Colorado's San Luis Valley Field Office website. No comments or inquiries have been received by the SLVFO concerning this project since it was initiated on February 1, 2013.

## **CHAPTER 2 - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information on the Proposed Action and Alternatives.

### **2.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL**

#### **2.2.1 Proposed Action**

The BLM proposes to modify the San Luis Valley Field Office Travel Management Plan in the following ways, and as illustrated on the attached current and proposed maps. Listed immediately below are only those considerations proposed in this update to the San Luis Valley Field Office Travel Management Plan (TMP) that were not directly considered in the 2009 TMP, and represent new proposals or new decisions that were outside of that earlier process, yet are in full agreement with the methodology and analysis of the 2009 TMP. Other modifications or changes to previously considered decisions are regarded as administrative corrections to the 2009 Travel Management Plan. All changes to the SLVFO Comprehensive Travel and Transportation



Management system are illustrated in the attached current vs. proposed maps. The maps referenced in the following narrative also refer to those same maps (labeled A-J).

Map Disclaimer - Although the data presented within the maps of this document, and the maps themselves, have been processed successfully on computers of BLM, no warranty, expressed or implied, is made by BLM regarding the use of these maps or the data represented, nor does the fact of distribution constitute or imply any such warranty. The Bureau of Land Management reserves the right to correct, update, modify or replace this geospatial information without notification. For more information, contact the San Luis Valley Field Office at 719-852-6200.

#### **MAP A**

- Apply seasonal road closures to all motorized routes from Poncha Pass (east side of U.S. Highway 285) to Saguache County Road LL57 (Hayden Pass), with the exception of the Glider Road (BLM Road 5342) from March 1<sup>st</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup> for the protection of the Gunnison Sage Grouse, which was listed as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in January of 2013.

#### **MAP C**

- Vista Grande Recreation Area – add 2 trail segments. New construction on the southern trail of approximately 1.6 miles. All other proposed segments already exist on ground.

#### **MAP E**

- Add Pronghorn trails that connect to Town of Del Norte's singletrack mechanized trail system. New construction of approximately 3-4 miles, partially inventoried in 2010. Apply Critical Winter Range trail closure from January 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> to prevent disturbance to mule deer.

#### **MAP F**

- Add Stone Quarry trail. New construction of approximately 6 miles.
- Add 'Ron's Loop Trail' from Stone Quarry area to state land boundary. This popular trail has existed on the ground for many years, but was not originally inventoried in the 2009 TMP.
- New trail construction of approximately 1 mile that connects the bike trail south of Stone Quarry to Pup Peak road south of it.
- New trail construction of approximately 1/4 mile from Old Spanish Trail Wagon Tracks interpretive site to the current Administrative road south of the tracks to avoid trespass on private property with no public easement – ensures BLM control of transportation along that route.
- Add existing trail from Limekiln Road to pump house road. Partially inventoried in TMP.
- Limekiln Road Cutoff to Forest Service ATV Trail 854 already exists. Mountain bikers use it to bypass the large dispersed camping area at the junction of Limekiln and Nicomodes roads to avoid 'unruly' campers and large parties that are common in that area.



- New Trail Construction of approximately 1.5 miles between Nicomodes Road and the pump house road. Proposal is to develop singletrack trail from previously inventoried 2-tracks at each end with new construction in the middle.
- 'Open Play' mechanized only area. Located at the intersection of the Nicomodes and Bonafacio Cutoff Roads. A small area of flowing rock-covered bowls. Suitable for mountain bikes, but not motorcycles. Approximately 24 acres.

#### **MAP G**

- Entryway pullout and re-design at Zapata Falls Recreation Area. Also see Engineering Field Office schematic.
- New gravity-assisted trails being proposed throughout Zapata Falls Recreation Area. Almost the entire Recreation Area has been inventoried by all resource areas for hydro-axe fuels projects, campground construction, and Range TPR's. Apply Critical Winter Range trail closures from January 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> to prevent disturbance to elk migration corridor.

#### **MAP H**

- Add existing route from Dry Creek Road (5110) and Rock Creek Road (CR28) as singletrack motorized. Not part of original inventory in TMP, even though it's an old and well-used road.
- Greenie Mountain Singletrack Trail. Exists on ground and used frequently, but not part of original inventory.
- New Singletrack Trail in Greenie Mountain area. North side is an inventoried closed, dead-end road. The continuation of the road as a trail goes up the drainage to a saddle and comes down the south side of the same hill making a loop. Approximately 1.5 miles of new construction.
- New Trail – exists on ground, partially inventoried on both sides in TMP. Middle section wasn't fully inventoried, but already existed on ground during TMP.
- Close Bishop Rock Roads to motorized use in winter to utilize roads as cross-country ski and snowshoe trails, in conjunction with adjacent USFS Dick Boyce cross-country ski trails. Closure dates are flexible based on snow conditions.
- Bishop Rock mechanized trails and 'open play' area. Approximately 1.3 miles of new trail construction and 40 acres of solid rock bowls for open play area.

#### **MAP J**

- New 'Way' (Primitive 2-Track). Proposed by the Recreation program as a bypass to private property with no public easement in the Rio Grande Natural Area. Proposal is to 'wheel-in' (not construct) .8 miles of new 2-track to bypass the private property, which is expected to be fenced out soon by a new landowner, and guarantee public access to BLM lands.

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## Summary of Existing and Proposed Route Miles

San Luis Valley Field Office TMP Modifications - Existing and Proposed Route Miles					
ROD	Existing Miles	Added	Subtracted	Proposed Construction	Proposed Total
ATV Trail	7.7		4.3		3.4
Mechanized Trail	68.0	3.2	37.2	13.0	47.0
Mechanized Trail (& Limited User)	52.5		23.5		29.0
Closed	417.4	54.5	16.2		455.7
Foot/Horse Trail	37.8	2.2	17.2		22.8
Foot/Horse Trail (& Limited User)	3.7		3.7		0.0
Foot Only Trail	1.7		0.0		1.7
General (Open Road)	634.5	16.9	31.3	0.8	620.9
Limited User	218.6	37.6	6.4		249.8
Previously Inventoried but without Designation	6.4		5.6		0.9
Motorized Single Track	0.0	27.3	0.0	13.6	40.9
Motorized Single Track (& Limited User)	0.0	3.6	0.0		3.6
Itemized Route Designation Change Proposals	Miles				
ATV to Closed	2.5				
ATV to Motorized Single Track	1.6				
ATV to Motorized Single Track (& Limited User)	0.3				
Mechanized Trail to General	3.1				
Mechanized Trail to Close	28.8				
Mechanized Trail to Motorized Single Track	5.3				
Mechanized Trail (& Limited User) to Limited User	21.5				
Mechanized Trail (& Limited User) to Motorized Single Track	2.1				
Closed to Mechanized Trail	2.4				
Closed to General (Open Road)	7.3				
Closed to General w/ seasonal closure	1.5				
Closed to Limited User	0.6				
Closed to Motorized Single Track	4.4				
Foot/Horse Trail to Mechanized Trail	0.9				
Foot/Horse Trail to Close	14.9				
Foot/Horse Trail to Motorized Single Track	1.5				
Foot/Horse Trail (& Limited User) to Limited User	3.7				
General (Open Road) to Limited User	11.9				
General (Open Road) to Close	8.4				
General (Open Road) to Motorized Single Track	10.4				
General (Open Road) to Motorized Single Track (& Limited User)	0.6				
Limited User to General	5.0				
Limited User to Motorized Single Track	0.9				
Limited User to Motorized Single Track (& Limited User)	0.5				
Previously Inventoried but without Designation to Foot & Horse Trail	2.2				
Previously Inventoried but without Designation to Motorized Single Track	3.4				

The net effect of the proposed modifications to the SLVFO Travel Management Plan are to make minor adjustments to certain roads (based on monitoring), to reduce impacts to cultural and natural resources and to increase connectivity and efficiency. The most significant proposed changes are to the overall trail system, which will reduce the quantity of trails in favor of quality and sustainability, and puts trail systems near communities and major tourism destinations where the demand for trails is high, and includes opportunities for motorized singletrack trail use that is non-existent in the current TMP. The third aspect of the proposed modifications is to address seasonal wildlife closures on specific routes for the protection of big game species in critical winter range, and the recently listed Gunnison Sage Grouse during the lek and nesting seasons.



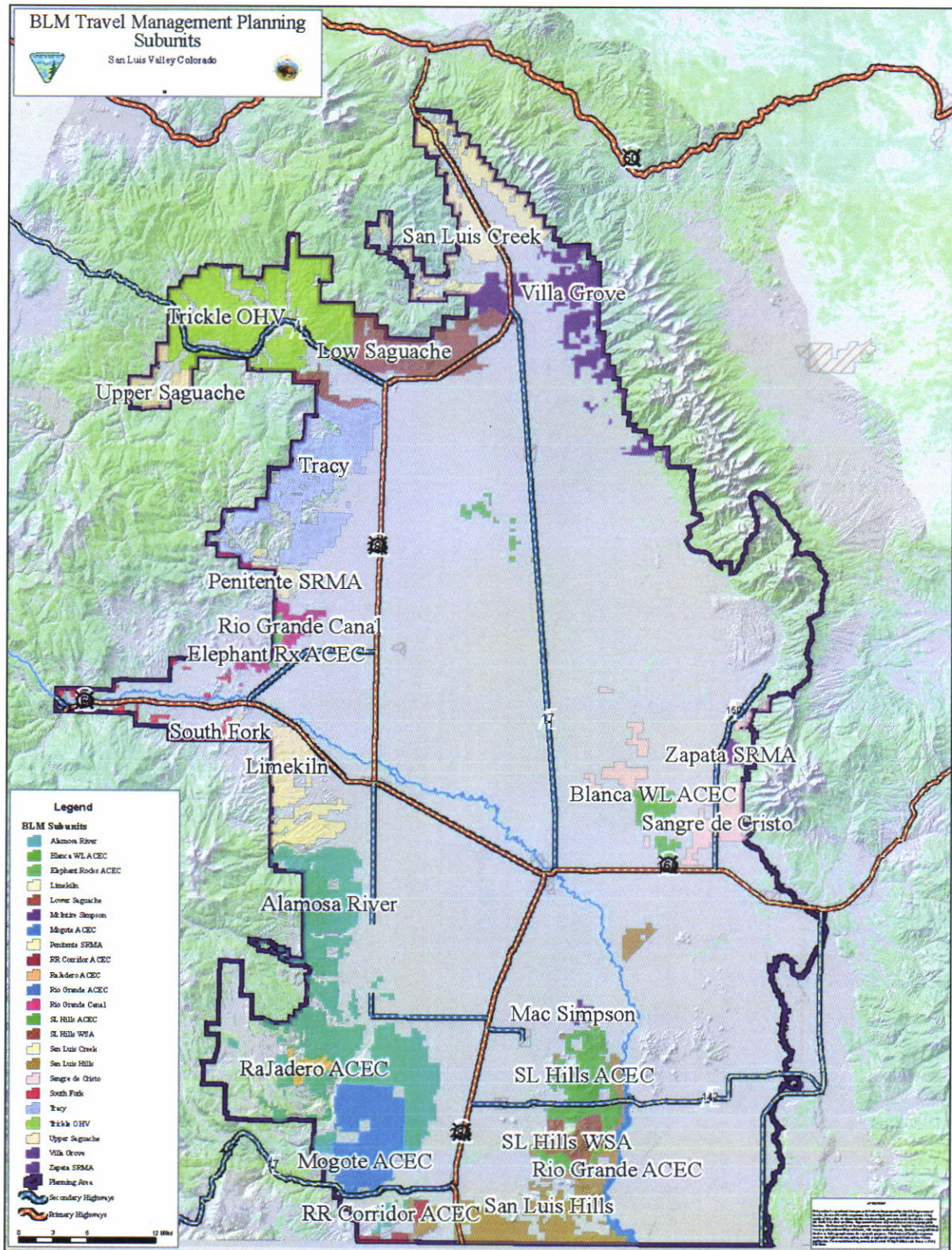
The proposed action simultaneously manages recreation for resource benefit, while improving recreational opportunities and experiences through a more focused, multi-modal transportation system.

All trail maintenance, rehabilitation, realignment and new construction will be performed in accordance with established Best Management Practices and per the Federal Highway Administration's Interagency Trail Standards.

Adaptive management strategies will be adopted to make minor adjustments and modifications to elements of both the 2009 TMP as well as this proposal when it is in the best interest of environmental protection and/or management objectives. These minor modifications will be documented and tiered to the 2009 TMP and the current analysis through the use of a Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA).

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## Travel Management Planning Subunits Map





### 2.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, there would be no change to any routes in the existing Travel Management Plan. There would be little to no opportunity for improving the unit's Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management system by: 1) reducing impacts to natural resources from poorly located routes, 2) increasing connectivity and efficiency of routes, 3) reducing the quantity of trails in favor of quality and sustainability, and locating trail systems near communities and major tourism destinations where the demand for trails is high, and 4) providing for increased protection of big game species and the recently listed Gunnison Sage Grouse through seasonal route closures.

## CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the proposed action and presents comparative analyses of the direct, indirect and cumulative effects on the affected environment stemming from the implementation of the actions under the proposed action and other alternatives analyzed.

#### 3.1.1 Interdisciplinary Team Review

The following table is provided as a mechanism for resource staff review, to identify those resource values with issues or potential impacts from the proposed action and/or alternatives. Those resources identified in the table as impacted or potentially impacted will be brought forward for analysis.

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Initial and date</u>	<u>Comment or Reason for Dismissal from Analysis</u>
<b><u>Environmental Justice</u></b> <i>Martin Weimer, Front Range District Office (FRDO)</i>	MW 4/18/2013	The effects on Environmental Justice from the proposed action are not changed from the 2009 Travel Management Plan.
<b><u>Socioeconomics</u></b> <i>Martin Weimer, FRDO</i>	MW 4/18/2013	The effects on Socioeconomics from the proposed action are not changed from the 2009 Travel Management Plan.
<b><u>Noise</u></b> <i>Martin Weimer, FRDO</i>	MW 4/18/2013	The proposed action will not result in any impacts due to noise or result in any increased noise levels.
<b><u>Special Status Animal Species</u></b> <i>Melissa Garcia</i>	MSG 2/1/2013	<u>Additional Protections/Mitigations Required:</u> The Gunnison Sage Grouse was listed in January 2013 by the USF&WS as an Endangered Species. Stipulations and mitigations are necessary to protect the bird's lek and nesting seasons in its identified habitat area within the Field Office. More specific stipulations and mitigations related to Gunnison Prairie Dogs (a candidate species) are also necessary to improve protection of that species beyond what the 2009 Travel Management

<b><u>Resource</u></b>	<b><u>Initial and date</u></b>	<b><u>Comment or Reason for Dismissal from Analysis</u></b>
		Plan called for.
<b><u>Wildlife Aquatic and Wetlands</u></b> <i>Melissa Garcia</i>	MSG 2/1/2013	There are no impacts to aquatic wildlife or wetlands resulting from the proposed action.
<b><u>Wildlife Terrestrial</u></b> <i>Melissa Garcia</i>	MSG 2/1/2013	<u>Additional Protections/Mitigations Required:</u> The development of trails in the Pronghorn area and at the Zapata Falls Recreation area, require winter seasonal closure stipulations to mitigate impacts to big game species in those critical winter range areas.
<b><u>Migratory Birds</u></b> <i>Melissa Garcia</i>	MSG 2/1/2013	<u>Additional Protections/Mitigations Required:</u> Utilizing more specific stipulations and mitigations related to Migratory Birds and travel management implementation will improve protection of this resource beyond what the 2009 Travel Management Plan called for.
<b><u>Special Status Plant Species</u></b> <i>Eduardo Duran</i>	END 4/4/2013	There are no negative impacts to TES Plant species resulting from the proposed action, instead there is a positive impact resulting from route designation change. The findings for Standard 4 from the proposed action are not changed from the 2009 Travel Management Plan.
<b><u>Farmlands Prime and Unique</u></b> <i>Eduardo Duran</i>	END 4/4/2013	There are no prime and unique farmlands present within the project area.
<b><u>Riparian</u></b> <i>Eduardo Duran</i>	END 4/4/2013	The effects on Riparian Resources and finding for Standard 2 from the proposed action are not changed from the 2009 Travel Management Plan.
<b><u>Air Quality</u></b> <i>Negussie Tedela</i>	NT 04/03/2013	The proposed action does not impact Air Quality.
<b><u>Soils</u></b> <i>Negussie Tedela</i>	NT 04/03/2013	The effects on Soils from the proposed action are not changed from the 2009 Travel Management Plan.
<b><u>Water Quality Surface and Ground</u></b> <i>Negussie Tedela</i>	NT 04/03/2013	The effects on Water Quality from the proposed action are not changed from the 2009 Travel Management Plan.
<b><u>Vegetation</u></b> <i>Mark Swinney</i>	MS 3/21/5013	The effects on Vegetation from the proposed action are not changed from the 2009 Travel Management Plan.
<b><u>Range and Forest Management</u></b> <i>Mark Swinney</i>	MS 3/21/5013	The effects on Rangeland and Forest Management from the proposed action are not changed from the 2009 Travel Management Plan.
<b><u>Range Management</u></b> <i>Melissa Shawcroft</i>	MJS 4/2/2013	The proposed action affords livestock permittees greater flexibility in establishing campsites, and preventing negative encounters between recreationists and livestock operators.



<b><u>Resource</u></b>	<b><u>Initial and date</u></b>	<b><u>Comment or Reason for Dismissal from Analysis</u></b>
<b><u>Invasive Plants</u></b> <i>Alyssa Radcliff</i>	AR 4/2/2013	The proposed action results in a net loss to both roads and trails from the existing Travel Management Plan, and represents a reduction in cumulative impacts related to invasive plant species.
<b><u>Cultural Resources</u></b> <i>Angie Krall</i>	AMK 4/3/2013	<b><u>Additional Protections/Mitigations Required:</u></b> Utilizing more specific stipulations and mitigations related to Cultural Resources and travel management implementation will improve protection of this resource beyond what the 2009 Travel Management Plan called for.
<b><u>Native American Religious Concerns</u></b> <i>Angie Krall</i>	AMK 4/3/2013	No known sacred sites or places of religious concern will be impacted as a result of the proposed changes to the Travel Management Plan.
<b><u>Paleontology</u></b> <i>Angie Krall</i>	AMK 4/3/2013	Impacts to paleontological resources are unlikely to occur as a result of the proposed changes to the Travel Management Plan.
<b><u>Visual Resources</u></b> <i>Sean Noonan</i>	STN 2/1/2013	The proposed action will not alter the Visual Resource Management classes.
<b><u>Recreation</u></b> <i>Sean Noonan</i>	STN 2/1/2013	The proposed action improves resource protection, transportation and access, and recreational opportunities.
<b><u>Wilderness, WSAs, ACECs, Wild &amp; Scenic Rivers</u></b> <i>Sean Noonan</i>	STN 2/1/2013	The proposed action has no impact on wilderness character or suitability. There will be no impact to ACEC's with recreation values. Wild & Scenic Rivers are not present.
<b><u>Wilderness Characteristics</u></b> <i>Sean Noonan</i>	STN 2/1/2013	The proposed action has no impact to Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, which do not exist on the unit outside of existing WSA's.
<b><u>Geology/Minerals</u></b> <i>Andrew Archuleta</i>	AA 4/22/13	There will be no impact to Geologic features or locatable minerals. One public access road in the Limekiln CUA rock collecting area is planned for conversion to motorized trail and will limit some access to the overall rock collecting area, however, it traverses mostly open rangeland and does not represent a significant impediment to rock collection in that area.
<b><u>Wastes Hazardous or Solid</u></b> <i>Andrew Archuleta</i>	AA 4/22/13	The proposed action will have no direct or indirect effect on Hazardous or Solid Wastes.
<b><u>Lands and Realty</u></b> <i>Leon Montoya</i>	LAM 4/1/2013	The proposed action will not result in any impacts to the Lands and Realty status on BLM.
<b><u>Cadastral Survey</u></b> <i>Sean Hines</i>	SJH 3/29/2013	The proposed action will not result in any impacts to existing Cadastral monuments or result in any need for additional surveys. It is recommended that a search for existing monuments be made before any new construction of roads or trails.

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Initial and date</u>	<u>Comment or Reason for Dismissal from Analysis</u>
<b>Fire</b> <i>Paul Minow</i>	PM 4/1/2013	The proposed action is not affected by natural or management-ignited fires.
<b>Law Enforcement</b> <i>Brian Garcia</i>	BG 4/2/2013	The proposed action will have no additional impact on Law Enforcement capabilities.

The affected resources brought forward for analysis include:

- Special Status Animal Species
- Wildlife Terrestrial
- Migratory Birds
- Cultural Resources

## **3.2 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

### **3.2.1 THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES**

Affected Environment: The Affected Environment section for TES Animals from the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan remains valid for this analysis.

Environmental Effects: The Environmental Effects section for TES Animals from the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan remains valid for this analysis, with the following additions:

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts:

In January 2013, the Gunnison Sage Grouse was listed as 'Endangered' by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As a result, a wildlife protection stipulation; seasonal road closures designed to protect Gunnison Sage Grouse lek's and the nesting season from March 1<sup>st</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup>, will be applied to all motorized routes in the Gunnison Sage Grouse habitat area in the vicinity of Poncha Pass on the east side of U.S. Highway 285 and extending south to Saguache County Road LL57 (with the exception of the Glider Road - 5342).

There are no known threatened or endangered species that occur within the project area that have the potential to be affected by the proposed actions. Therefore, there are no anticipated impacts to threatened or endangered species through actions described in this document.

Species of concern that may be affected by trail and road maintenance are Gunnison Prairie Dog (Candidate species) and Western Burrowing Owl (BLM sensitive species). Both species exist



within the Field Office, and actions that create ground disturbance where they do exist would need to occur outside of the primary breeding season (May 15-July 15) to minimize disturbance. Gunnison Prairie Dogs are also vulnerable to disturbance when they are hibernating (December through March), and are not able to leave burrows when heavy equipment operation occurs during these periods.

#### Protective/Mitigation Measures:

Gunnison Sage Grouse: Seasonal road closures will be applied to the Gunnison Sage Grouse lek and nesting habitat area, and includes all motorized routes from Poncha Pass (east of U.S. Highway 285) to the Hayden Pass Road (Saguache County Road LL57), with the exception of the Glider Road (BLM Road 5342 accessed through CR-LL57), which is outside of Gunnison Sage Grouse habitat. Dates for seasonal road closures are from March 1<sup>st</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup>.

Gunnison Prairie Dogs: Any activities that occur in areas occupied by prairie dogs should occur between April and the middle of May, or between July 15<sup>th</sup> to December 1<sup>st</sup>. If active prairie dog burrows can be avoided during this time, then route construction/maintenance activities can occur at any time.

#### No Action Alternative

#### Direct and Indirect Impacts:

The existing travel and transportation system (Alternative C-Modified) from the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan does not afford the same level of protection to big game species in critical winter range as the proposed action alternative does, and retains a significantly more fragmented landscape with the current trail segments scattered across the Field Office than the focused and concentrated trail systems outlined in the proposed action.

#### **Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Special Status, Threatened & Endangered species:**

The proposed action alternative provides for important wildlife protection measures for the recently listed Gunnison Sage Grouse. Abandoning numerous trails and trail segments throughout the Field Office, especially in Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and other specially defined habitat areas, reduces overall habitat fragmentation, thereby increasing sustainability of TES wildlife communities.

### **3.2.2 WILDLIFE TERRESTRIAL**

Affected Environment: The Affected Environment section for Wildlife Terrestrial from the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan remains valid for this analysis.

Environmental Effects: The Environmental Effects section for Wildlife Terrestrial from the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan remains valid for this analysis, with the following additions:

## Proposed Action

### Protective/Mitigation Measures:

Critical Winter Range closures from January 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> are necessary for trail systems at the Pronghorn area (south of Del Norte) and the Zapata Falls Recreation Area. The Pronghorn seasonal closure is to protect mule deer from disturbance in critical winter habitat, and the seasonal closure at Zapata Falls SRMA is to protect an important winter elk migration corridor.

### **Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Animal Communities:**

The proposed action alternative provides for important wildlife protection measures in critical winter range for big game species. Abandoning numerous trails and trail segments throughout the Field Office, especially in Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, reduces overall habitat fragmentation, thereby increasing sustainability of terrestrial wildlife communities.

### **3.2.3 MIGRATORY BIRDS**

Affected Environment: The Affected Environment section for Migratory Birds from the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan remains valid for this analysis.

Environmental Effects: The Environmental Effects section for Migratory Birds from the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan remains valid for this analysis, with the following additions:

## Proposed Action

### Direct and Indirect Impacts:

Migratory Birds do occur within the project area and multiple species occur year-round. The greatest concern for migratory birds is when projects occur during the breeding/nesting season where disturbance can affect those activities. When encountered, disturbance to migratory birds is less likely to occur (including affects to individuals, impacts to nests, impacts to breeding activities, and loss of individual viability) if the project activities are done outside of the May 15<sup>th</sup> -July 15<sup>th</sup> nesting season.

### Protective/Mitigation Measures:

Activities that occur outside the primary breeding season (May 15<sup>th</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup>) are less likely to affect neo-tropical migrants. If nests are encountered, activities must occur outside of those dates to prevent disturbance.



### **3.3 HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

#### **3.3.1 CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Affected Environment: This analysis of the affected environment for cultural resources includes new trail construction and free play acres. The Area of Potential Effect (APE) will include areas where new construction and free play areas are proposed where no previous cultural resource surveys have occurred. The National Historic Preservation Act (1966) requires that all areas slated for potential ground-disturbing activities, or land which will leave Federal agency control through sale or exchange, be surveyed for cultural resources in order to comply with 36 CFR 800 of the Act, as amended. The legal framework also requires that the BLM also consider cultural resources as they relate to the Archeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) of 1979, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1979) and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1992). A National Programmatic Agreement among the BLM, the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation (ACHP), and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, as well as the Colorado State Protocol between the Colorado BLM and the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office (COSHPO), allows for the BLM to make determinations of eligibility (DOEs) and effect when there is no potential for *adverse effects* on historic properties. Because of the potential for adverse effects from these proposals, the San Luis Valley Field Office will be consulting with the COSHPO on this project and concurrence will be required before any implementation occurs. A detailed analysis will be documented in two Section 106 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) reports that will be sent to the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office (COSHPO) for concurrence (Hegberg and Krall 2013, Troyer 2013).

The pre-field (Class I) analysis for cultural resources utilized the records of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the cultural resource atlas of the San Luis Valley Field Office, all relevant Cultural Resource Management (CRM) reports, General Land Office (GLO) plat maps, aerial photographs and historic photographs. A Class III intensive cultural resource inventory has been conducted within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) by archaeologists from the San Luis Valley Field Office (SLVFO) and the Royal Gorge Field Office (RGFO).

#### Environmental Effects:

##### Proposed Action

##### Direct and Indirect Impacts:

The proposed action has the potential for direct, indirect and cumulative effects to cultural resources. Direct effects can include displacement of artifacts, artifact breakage, context destruction from the construction of illegal trail spurs and riders going off designated trails. Indirect effects can include erosion of archaeological contexts from poorly designed trails and illegal trails. New access has the potential for increased site vandalism and artifact collection. The loss of archaeological resources has happened in the past and will happen in the future. The cumulative effect is that over time fewer archaeological resources will be available to learn about past human lifeways, to study changes in human behavior through time, and to interpret the past



to the public. In surveyed areas, recording and archiving basic information about each site for future reference serves to partially mitigate potential effects to cultural resources. Adequate cultural resource inventories and site documentation, monitoring, avoidance of historic properties during new construction, proper trail construction and public education can aid in mitigating potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects to cultural resources.

According to the 2004 revised regulations [36 CFR 800.4(d) (1)] for Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 470f) the recommended determination for the action alternative is ***no adverse effect*** if recommended design criteria are implemented. Under the implementing regulations of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800), sites considered *not eligible* to the NRHP may be directly affected once adequately recorded, evaluated, and concurrence is received from the State Historic Preservation Office regarding NRHP eligibility.

#### Protective/Mitigation Measures/Design Criteria:

**Avoidance:** All eligible historic properties and unevaluated cultural resources will be avoided by project activities. Recreation staff will collaborate with Cultural staff in trail design to avoid historic properties within the Pronghorn and Quarry Loop project areas.

**Cultural Landscape/Historic District:** The Pronghorn Project Area will be nominated as a Cultural Landscape/Historic District and all historic properties will be avoided within it. A comprehensive context and interpretation of the area will be developed in concert with the COSHPO and the SLVFO.

**Prevention of Illegal Trails:** To avoid the proliferation of illegal or 'bandit' trails seen on other BLM lands, the Field Office will develop a proactive public education campaign and partner with individuals and groups to promote a message of resource protection.

**Monitoring:** Historic properties that require avoidance within the Pronghorn and Quarry Loop systems will occur on an annual basis.

**Discovery and Education Stipulation:** Any cultural and/or paleontological resources (historic or prehistoric site or object) discovered by the Bureau of Land Management or any person working on the Bureau of Land Management's behalf, on public or Federal land shall be immediately reported to the Authorized Officer, BLM San Luis Valley Field Office Manager. The BLM or its contractors shall suspend all operations in the immediate area of such discovery until written authorization to proceed is issued by the Authorized Officer and Cultural staff. An evaluation of the discovery will be made by the Authorized Officer to determine the appropriate actions to follow to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values. The BLM will be responsible for the cost of the evaluation. Any decision as to proper mitigation measures to be taken will be made by the Authorized Officer after consultation with the Colorado State Historical Preservation Office.



Collection or disturbance of artifacts and other archaeological, historical, and paleontological materials by the BLM, its representatives, contractors, or employees, shall not be allowed. Offenders shall be subject to prosecution under the appropriate State and Federal laws.

No new route construction or development may occur until approval to proceed is given by the Authorized Officer.

No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts:

If there is no federal action, then there is no undertaking, as defined in 36 CFR 800.2(o), for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f).

### **3.3.2 NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS**

Affected Environment: The Affected Environment section for Native American Religious Concerns from the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan remains valid for this analysis.

Environmental Effects: The Environmental Effects section for Native American Religious Concerns from the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan remains valid for this analysis, with the following additions:

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts:

Tribal Consultation was conducted as part of the 2009 SLRATMP. There are no known Native American religious concerns within the project area related to the proposed action.

Protective/Mitigation Measures:

Native American human remains: Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder must notify the Authorized Officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony on federal land. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (c) and (d), the holder must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery that could adversely affect the discovery. The holder shall make a reasonable effort to protect the human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony for a period of thirty days after written notice is provided to the Authorized Officer, or until the Authorized Officer has issued a written notice to proceed, whichever occurs first.

### **3.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY**

The existing NEPA documents analyze the cumulative impacts to the designated transportation system within the planning area. The roads and trails identified in the proposed action are included in this analysis of cumulative impacts in the SLRA TMP. The addition, deletion, or modifications of routes identified in the proposed action do not represent any significant changes to cumulative impacts within the planning area.

## **CHAPTER 4 - CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

### **4.1 LIST OF PREPARERS AND PARTICIPANTS**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY</b>
Martin Weimer	NEPA Coordinator	Environmental Justice, Noise, Socioeconomics
Mark Swinney	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Forestry
Melissa Shawcroft	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation
Melissa Garcia	Wildlife Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife, Terrestrial Wildlife, Migratory Birds, T&E Animal Species, Wetlands
Sean Noonan	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC (Rec), W&S Rivers, Transportation & Access
Angie Krall	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources / Native American, Paleontology
Eduardo Duran	Natural Resource Specialist	Riparian, T&E Plant Species
Negussie Tedela	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights, Soils
Alyssa Radcliff	Wildlife Biologist	Invasive Plants
Paul Minow	Fuels Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Ecology, Fuels Management
Andrew Archuleta	Geologist	Minerals, Oil and Gas, Waste Hazardous or Solid
Brain Garcia	Law Enforcement Ranger	Law Enforcement
Sean Hines	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey
Leon Montoya	Realty Specialist	Lands and Realty
Doug Simon	GIS Specialist	GIS Database, Cartography

### **4.2 TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED**

Original TMP EA (CO-500-2005-0016-EA): Numerous persons, agencies, the San Luis Valley affiliated tribes, and BLM staff were consulted. See pp. 232-236 of San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan.



This TMP Modifications EA:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Rio Grande National Forest (LEO and Divide RD Recreation and Range Personnel)

Colorado State Historical Preservation Office

Town of Del Norte

City of Monte Vista

Town of Saguache

Gunnison Sage Grouse Working Group

Leon Crowther, Range Permittee

J.D. Schmidt, Range Permittee

Charlie Burd, Range Permittee

Jan Klecker, Range Permittee

All resource disciplines of the BLM San Luis Valley Field Office

## CHAPTER 5 - REFERENCES

Hegberg, Erin and Angie Krall. (2013). *A Cultural Resource Inventory of the Pronghorn Non-Motorized Trail Project (12-RG-SLVFO-003)*. Draft on file at the Cultural Staff Office, Monte Vista, Colorado.

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## **Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

### **DOI-BLM-CO-300-2013-0004 EA**

Based on review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects from either alternative assessed or evaluated meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined by 43 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below:

#### **RATIONALE:**

**Context:** The proposed project area is located in Saguache, Rio Grande, Alamosa, and Conejos Counties of the San Luis Valley, Colorado.

The general area is primarily considered to be the Southern Rio Grande Basin of the Great Plains-Palouse Dry Steppe eco-region.

The project was initiated after Travel Management Implementation efforts for the 2009 San Luis Resource Area TMP were begun in various areas and a comprehensive inventory of all linear features on the San Luis Valley Field Office was conducted in Fiscal Year 2012.

This project is a comprehensive and evaluative assessment of the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan (SLRA TMP), based on ground-truthing of the existing transportation system, and combined with public proposals and feedback from the 2009 Travel Management Plan. Because the project area includes 4 of the 6 counties that comprise the San Luis Valley, this project is considered Regional in significance.

**Intensity:** I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the San Luis Valley Field Office Travel Management Plan Modifications project decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

#### **Impacts that may be beneficial and adverse:**

The San Luis Valley Field Office Travel Management Modifications project results in mostly beneficial effects by reducing the overall number of miles of roads and trails, and continues the work of the San Luis Resource Area TMP in developing a sustainable transportation system that provides reasonable public access while seeking to improve land health.

#### **Public health and safety:**

Public health and safety is not significantly affected by this project. The development of trail systems that often stand alone from roads helps to reduce user conflict on roads,



especially between motorized and non-motorized uses and creates a safer and more enjoyable experience for all users. No other health and safety issues were identified.

**Unique characteristics of the geographic area:**

The project includes the new development of non-motorized trails in the Zapata Falls SRMA, the addition of a previously existing primitive road as a non-motorized and non-mechanized trail in the San Luis Hills WSA, and improved public access through primitive roads to the Rio Grande Natural Area.

**Degree to which effects are likely to be highly controversial:**

There is no controversy with the effects of the proposed action or disagreement or controversy among ID team members or reviewers over the nature of the effects on the resource values on public land by the proposed action.

**Degree to which effects are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks:**

The effects of the proposed action are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

**Consideration of whether the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts:**

This decision is like one of many that have previously been made, and will continue to be made, by BLM responsible officials regarding Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management on public lands. The decision is within the scope of the Resource Management Plan and the San Luis Valley Field Office Travel Management Plan, and is not expected to establish a precedent for future actions. The decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The inventory that led to the proposed action identified two Land Use Planning-level issues regarding Travel Management that will be rectified in the next RMP revision (see below).

**Consideration of whether the action is related to other actions with cumulatively significant impacts:**

The proposed action does not produce any individual or cumulatively significant environmental impacts. On the contrary, the proposed action reduces the adverse impacts from the no-action alternative.

**Scientific, cultural or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:**

BLM Colorado operates under a protocol agreement with the Colorado State Historical Preservation Office to ensure the protection of cultural heritage on public lands within the state. Site specific surveys of all proposed changes to the TMP have been completed. No sites are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

**Threatened and endangered species and their critical habitat:**

The proposed action does not adversely affect any threatened or endangered species. The proposed action includes a seasonal road closure stipulation within the designated habitat area of the recently listed Gunnison Sage Grouse.

**Any effects that threaten a violation of Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment:** The proposed action conforms with the provisions of NEPA (U.S.C. 4321-4346) and FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) and is compliant with the Clean Water Act and The Clean Air Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), and the Endangered Species Act.

The context and intensity of the proposed action supports the legal mandates as well as the direction outlined in the San Luis Resource Area Resource Management Plan (SLRA RMP). Therefore, based on the analysis provided in the San Luis Valley Field Office Travel Management Modifications EA and the requirements set forth in the SLRA RMP, I hereby approve the Finding of No Significant Impact resulting from the assessment of the Proposed Action.

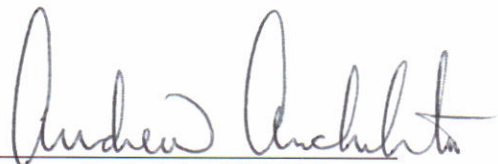
NAME OF PREPARER: /s/ Sean Noonan

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: /s/ Paul Tigan

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: /s/ Martin Weimer

DATE: 4/18/2013

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

  
Andrew Archuleta, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 4/22/13

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE SAN LUIS VALLEY FIELD OFFICE  
COMPREHENSIVE TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM  
NOT ADDRESSED IN THIS TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN MODIFICATIONS  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

In accordance with BLM policy, an RMP amendment is required to change the motorized Off-Highway Vehicle designations of Open, Closed, or Limited for the San Luis Valley Field Office's Travel Management Areas (TMA's). Two changes to those designations are expected to occur in the next RMP revision, including:

1. **Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)** – At the time of the 2009 TMP, the U.S. Forest Service had not yet completed the official map of the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness, which was designated by Congress in 1993. Previously, it was believed that only one WSA existed on BLM lands in the San Luis Valley (San Luis Hills WSA). However, after review of the official Sangre de Cristo Wilderness maps (completed in 2010), portions of two of the original San Luis Resource Area WSA's (Papa Keal and Black Canyon) were not



included in the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness area and remain WSA's for the San Luis Valley Field Office until Congress either designates them as wilderness or releases them for other uses. In the meantime, and in accordance with the BLM Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review (H-8550-1), they will be managed so as not to impair their wilderness character and suitability. In the next RMP revision, all three WSA's will be designated as 'Closed' to Off-Highway Vehicle Use.

2. **Manassa Open Motorized Area** - The 2009 RMP amendment designated two "Open" areas for motorized Off-Highway Vehicle use within the Field Office; the Manassa Open Area and the Antonito Open Area. In the next RMP revision, the Manassa Open Area (located adjacent to the San Luis Hills WSA and partially located within the San Luis Hills ACEC), is proposed to be re-designated from "Open" to "Limited" for motorized Off-Highway Vehicle use for the following reasons:

- Non-Use of Intended Purpose - the Manassa Open Area has never been utilized as a motorized OHV open area.
- Trash Dump Site - The area is used solely as an illegal trash dump site and is severely degraded.
- Invasive Species - Due to the significant trash dumping, the Manassa Open Area serves as a major vector for the introduction of noxious weeds to the surrounding area.

## **DECISION RECORD**

### **DOI-BLM-CO-300-2013-0004 EA**

**DECISION:** It is my decision to implement all aspects of the proposed action described in the San Luis Valley Field Office Travel Management Plan Modifications Environmental Assessment.

For administrative clarification, it is my decision to rename the “San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan” to the “San Luis Valley Field Office Travel Management Plan”. It is also my decision to make the San Luis Valley Field Office’s electronic Geographic Information System (GIS) database the official record of the SLVFO Travel and Transportation Management Plan. Additionally, and as related to the SLVFO’s Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management system, the official record for public easements is located with the appropriate authority (i.e. County Courts, San Luis Valley Field Office, etc.), and the official record for Right-Of-Way (ROW) grants is also located with the appropriate authority and reflected in the BLM’s LR-2000 database.

**RATIONALE:** The proposed action will not result in significant negative effects to the environment and will further improve the balance between public travel and access and resource management, RMP goals, and Public Land Health Standards. No cumulative impacts are anticipated.

**MITIGATION MEASURES:** All Protective/Mitigation Measures described in the 2009 San Luis Resource Area Travel Management Plan (DOI-BLM-CO-500-2005-0016-EA), and the 2011 Penitente Canyon SRMA Travel Management Modifications plan (DOI-BLM-CO-140-2011-0010-DN) still apply.

The following Protective/Mitigation Measures described in this Environmental Assessment under “Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species”, “Wildlife Terrestrial”, “Migratory Birds”, “Heritage Resources and Human Environment”, and “Native American Religious Concerns” also apply:

#### **THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES**

- **Gunnison Sage Grouse:** Seasonal road closures will be applied to the Gunnison Sage Grouse lek and nesting habitat area, and includes all motorized routes from Poncha Pass (east of U.S. Highway 285) to the Hayden Pass Road (Saguache County Road LL57), with the exception of the Glider Road (BLM Road 5342 accessed through CR-LL57), which is outside of Gunnison Sage Grouse habitat. Dates for seasonal road closures are from March 1<sup>st</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup>.
- **Gunnison Prairie Dogs:** Any activities that occur in areas occupied by prairie dogs should occur between April and the middle of May, or between July 15<sup>th</sup> to December 1<sup>st</sup>. If active prairie dog burrows can be avoided during this time, then route construction/maintenance activities can occur at any time.



## **WILDLIFE TERRESTRIAL**

- Critical Winter Range closures from January 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> are necessary for trail systems at the Pronghorn area (south of Del Norte) and the Zapata Falls Recreation Area. The Pronghorn seasonal closure is to protect mule deer from disturbance in critical winter habitat, and the seasonal closure at Zapata Falls SRMA is to protect an important winter elk migration corridor.

## **MIGRATORY BIRDS**

- Activities that occur outside the primary breeding season (May 15<sup>th</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup>) are less likely to affect neo-tropical migrants. If nests are encountered, activities must occur outside of those dates to prevent disturbance.

## **HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

- Avoidance: All eligible historic properties and unevaluated cultural resources will be avoided by project activities. Recreation Staff will collaborate with Cultural Staff in trail design to avoid historic properties within the Pronghorn and Quarry Loop project areas.
- Cultural Landscape/Historic District: The Pronghorn Project Area will be nominated as a Cultural Landscape/Historic District and all historic properties will be avoided within it. A comprehensive context and interpretation of the area will be developed in concert with the COSHPO and the SLVFO.
- Prevention of Illegal Trails: To avoid the proliferation of illegal or 'bandit' trails seen on other BLM lands, the Field Office will develop a proactive public education campaign and partner with individuals and groups to promote a message of resource protection.
- Monitoring: Historic properties that require avoidance within the Pronghorn and Quarry Loop systems will occur on an annual basis.
- Discovery and Education Stipulation: Any cultural and/or paleontological resources (historic or prehistoric site or object) discovered by the Bureau of Land Management or any person working on the Bureau of Land Management's behalf, on public or Federal land shall be immediately reported to the Authorized Officer, BLM San Luis Valley Field Office Manager. The BLM or its contractors shall suspend all operations in the immediate area of such discovery until written authorization to proceed is issued by the Authorized Officer and Cultural Staff. An evaluation of the discovery will be made by the Authorized Officer to determine the appropriate actions to follow to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values. The BLM will be responsible for the cost of the evaluation. Any decision as to proper mitigation measures to be taken will be made by the Authorized Officer after consultation with the Colorado State Historical Preservation Office.

- Collection or disturbance of artifacts and other archaeological, historical, and paleontological materials by the BLM, its representatives, contractors, or employees, shall not be allowed. Offenders shall be subject to prosecution under the appropriate State and Federal laws.
- No new route construction or development may occur until cultural inventories are complete and approval to proceed is given by the Authorized Officer.

#### **NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS**

- Native American human remains: Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder must notify the Authorized Officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony on federal land. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (c) and (d), the holder must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery that could adversely affect the discovery. The holder shall make a reasonable effort to protect the human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony for a period of thirty days after written notice is provided to the Authorized Officer, or until the Authorized Officer has issued a written notice to proceed, whichever occurs first.

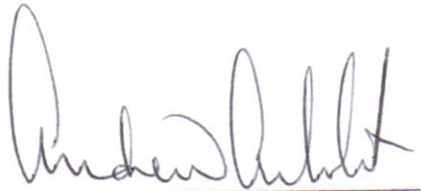
COMPLIANCE/MONITORING (optional):

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

DATE SIGNED: 4/22/13

APPENDICES: N/A

ATTACHMENTS: Current and Proposed Maps, A-J



Andrew Archuleta, Field Manager